

# There's a BYU-Bighorn connection

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**FLAMING GORGE** — Once they were casually slaughtered for food and driven out of their home range by domestic livestock.

Today they are so highly valued that in 1984 a Texas hunter bid \$67,500 for the privilege of hunting one, and state and federal wildlife agencies carried out a \$100,000 rescue operation to save a New Mexico herd.

The object of all this attention is the Desert Bighorn sheep.

And for one Brigham Young University Ph.D candidate, Tom Smith, the study of this endangered species has been an ongoing project.

Smith has set up a study center (a tent home) near Dutch John close to a transplanted herd of bighorn. He has watched the herd numbers grow from the 36 taken from a group near Dubois, Idaho in 1983 to 67 last summer.

Jerran Flinders, chairman of the Department Botany and Range Science at BYU and Smith's supervisor in the bighorn study, told the Daily Herald that a decline in animal numbers in Utah prompted the transplant four years ago.

"Big horn are native to many areas in Utah, Idaho and Nevada, including the Green River corridor, the Wasatch Front and the Deep Creek range near the Nevada border."

Flinders explained what the program, which is in cooperation with the state Division of Wildlife Resources, hopes to accomplish.

"Tom is conducting the study over several months. If the herd near Flaming Gorge develops as expected, we could use these animals as a seed herd for future



The beautiful and graceful Bighorn is being returned to some of its original habitat in Utah.

photographers, and naturalists, the desert bighorn is a symbol of the desert wilderness of the American Southwest. Yet the bighorn might have disappeared

into two groups: The Rocky Mountain Bighorn sheep, which inhabits the northern and more mountainous portions of this range, and desert bighorn, which

As more people settled the West, domestic cattle and sheep were introduced in large numbers. They competed with the bighorns for water, and overgrazed the land in places to the point that the bighorn could no longer live in their former abundance. The livestock are also believed to have brought with them a deadly parasite, the scabies mite, which may have caused large-scale die-offs of bighorns.

None of these developments by themselves probably would have threatened the bighorn sheep's existence. Taken together, however, these and other changes caused by people severely altered the animals' environment and reduced their numbers and range. The bighorn's major decline occurred between 1850 and 1900. In some places, the decline was so severe that hunting was prohibited as early as the 1860's.

While precise figures are lacking, some estimate that the bighorn population is found only in scattered mountain ranges of California, Nevada, New Mexico, Western Texas, Southern Utah and Colorado, and Northern Mexico.

Beginning about 50 years ago, the bighorn sheep started a comeback that has relieved any fears for its demise. In part, the bighorn's revival is due to the remoteness and barrenness of its habitat. But it has also been helped by the Federal Aid in Wildlife Restoration program.

The Federal Aid program was spawned during the Dust Bowl and the Depression of the 1930's, a time when hunters and conservation leaders had become



ald about their injuries and status on their respective teams.

For Robbie Bosco, it's been set back after set back ever since the Cougars played Temple Sept. 21, 1985 in Philadelphia when he injured his throwing shoulder.

He suffered a major injury then, but his condition was aggravated when he continued to start the remaining 10 games.

"Dr. Frank Jobe (the noted Los Angeles orthopedic expert) performed surgery last fall," said Bosco, who was drafted by the Green Bay Packers. "I'm undergoing therapy now and the shoulder is getting stronger each day. I don't have a full range of motion yet, but it's getting better."

Bosco said his surgery was similar to Chicago Bears quarterback Jim McMahon who had shoulder surgery in mid-December by Dr. Jobe.

"My operation wasn't as serious as McMahon's," said the former All-American, who led BYU to the national championship in 1984. "McMahon's surgery had to more with the rotator cuff, although the procedure was similar."

Bosco, in town to be honored along with other ex-Cougars at a recent basketball game, described the procedure.



Sports trainer Garve Walker is now working his rehabilitation magic on such ex-BYU

ammunition. taxes on sporting arms and am-  
nues received from federal excise-  
law earmarked for wildlife reve-  
Passed by Congress in 1937, the  
wildlife restoration.  
with much-needed money for  
sored a bill to provide the states  
his Robertson of Virginia spon-  
Nevada and Congressman A. Wil-  
cerns, Senator Key Pittman of  
orn. Responding to these con-  
American wildlife like the high-

is found in the southern and drier  
range and recent big game man-  
Before the arrival of the white  
reaches.  
man, the bighorn undoubtedly oc-  
cupied most of the isolated desert  
mountain ranges of Nevada, Cali-  
fornia, Arizona, New Mexico,  
Southern Utah, Southern Colo-  
rado, and Western Texas. Evi-  
dence from Indian rock art indi-  
cates bighorns were well distrib-  
uted, and many early explorers  
remarked on their abundance.

bighorn range have disappeared  
forever, had it not been for pains-  
taking research and enlightened  
restoration efforts, many of them  
carried out under another  
project: the Federal Aid in Wild-  
life Restoration program, popu-  
larly known as "Pittman-Rober-  
son" or "P-R."  
Bighorn sheep range across  
Western North America from  
California to Texas and from  
Southern Canada to Northern  
Mexico. Scientists divide the spe-

"Perhaps the two main ene-  
mies of the big horn are disease  
(lung worm) and the Cougar. We  
hope to extend the range of the  
big horn back into its original  
domain."  
Flinders wrote the original pro-  
posal which led to Smith conduct-  
ing his PH.D study.  
With its elegant, powerfully  
curved horns, a bighorn ram is  
one of the most prized trophy  
animals in the world. To hunters,